

Information about swine flu

What is swine flu?

- Swine flu is a type of flu virus normally found in pigs. The virus currently spreading between people is a version of swine flu, but scientists are still investigating where it came from.
- Swine flu is different to the seasonal flu that people catch in winter. This means that most people have no immunity to it and it can spread very quickly from person to person.
- The virus is also known as influenza A (H1N1).

Is swine flu different to normal flu or bird flu?

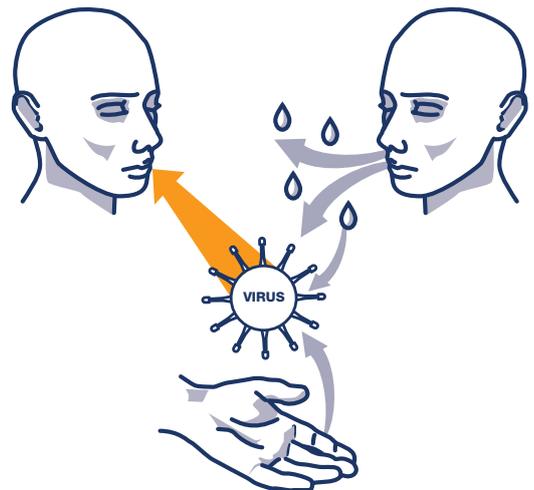
- The symptoms of swine flu are similar to normal flu.
- Because most people have no immunity to swine flu, the virus has become a pandemic – a global outbreak that has spread quickly.
- Bird flu is a flu usually confined to birds, but sometimes caught by people. Bird flu did not become a pandemic because it did not spread from person to person.

Will the outbreak get worse?

- The outbreak of swine flu has now become a pandemic. This means it has spread to many parts of the world. It does not mean that the virus has become more severe.
- Most cases are mild, but a small number of cases are more severe. Over 300 people have died, with 55–70,000 cases reported around the world.
- It is likely that the number of cases will increase over the coming months.

How do people catch swine flu?

- Flu viruses are tiny. They spread between people in the water droplets that come out of your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. Other people can breathe in these droplets and catch the virus.
- The water droplets can also be spread to surfaces that are touched by an infected person. Other people who touch those surfaces and then touch their face may catch the virus.
- All cold and flu viruses are spread in this way, including swine flu.



What are the symptoms of swine flu?

- The symptoms of swine flu are similar to normal flu.
- These are a **FEVERISH ILLNESS** accompanied by one or more of the following: **COUGH, SORE THROAT, RUNNY NOSE, LIMB/JOINT PAIN, HEADACHE.**

What should I do if I think I might have swine flu?

- If you think you might have swine flu, **STAY AT HOME** and contact your family doctor for advice.
- Do not travel to see a doctor unless you are told to do so, or you are very ill, because you might spread the illness to other people.
- Take medicines such as aspirin, ibuprofen or paracetamol to relieve the symptoms, but do not give aspirin or flu medicines containing aspirin to children aged under 16 years.
- Drink plenty of fluids and rest.

What if I am not aware of being in contact with anyone with swine flu but I have a flu-like illness?

- Again, stay at home and contact your family doctor.

How do doctors treat swine flu?

- If you think you might have swine flu, your doctor will ask you questions to decide whether it could be swine flu.
- Your doctor may arrange to take nose and throat swabs and/or give you antiviral drugs that can help you to recover more quickly and reduce the risk of complications.
- Your doctor should give you an antiviral drug within 48 hours of symptoms developing to make sure it has the best effect.

What can I do to stop it spreading?

- Good hygiene is very important to protect yourself and others from swine flu.
- Face masks do not protect you from becoming infected.
- The best thing to do is follow the steps in the diagram to stop the spread of germs.

Good hygiene to stop the spread of germs

- Always carry tissues.
- Use clean tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze.
- Put the tissues in the bin after one use.
- Wash your hands with soap and hot water often.
- Clean hard surfaces such as kitchen worktops and door handles often, using a normal cleaning product and a disposable cloth.
- Make sure your children follow the same advice.



What are governments doing?

- Governments and doctors have been planning for a flu pandemic for many years. Scientists know a lot about treatments and how to stop the virus spreading.
- The World Health Organization is closely monitoring cases of swine flu around the world and passes on daily updates to governments.

I have had a flu jab – am I protected?

- If you have had a seasonal flu jab, you are not protected against swine flu. Swine flu is a different type of virus.
- Scientists have developed a vaccine to swine flu that is now in production. Countries are working to build up the largest possible supply over the next few months.

Is it OK to travel to countries affected by swine flu?

- The World Health Organization recommends no restrictions on travel because of swine flu. However, you should ask your ministry of foreign affairs or national public health institute for the latest advice.
- If you do travel to an affected country, make sure you follow normal good hygiene advice to stop the spread of germs.
- If you have travelled to an affected country and you develop symptoms, stay at home and contact your family doctor.

Can I catch swine flu from eating pork?

- No. You cannot catch swine flu from eating pork or foods made from pork.

What else can I do?

- Make sure you have the latest advice. Look out for announcements on the TV and in the press.
- Think about what you would do if you and your family became ill. For example, who could collect medicines or shop for you?

Useful links

- NHS Choices: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pandemic-flu>
- World Health Organization: www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu

National helpline/website:

Your family doctor: